MARVEL COMICS
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DOCTOR STRANGE!
NORTHSTAR!
NOVA!
The INCREDIBLE HULK!
STARBLAST CROSSOVER
3
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...AND DOCTOR STRANGE'S HOUSE ON BLEECKER STREET.
THINGS JUST AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE, ARE THEY?*
SPEED-LINES
RON MARZ writer
TOM GRINDBERG penciler
MIKE DeCARLO AND COMPANY inker
JOHN COSTANZA letterer
JOHN KALISZ colorist
ROCKWITZ, MACCHIO, DeFALCO secret editors

* See recent events in Doc's own book. --MIKE
PLACE LOOKED LIKE A BATTLEFIELD--THE LOSER'S SIDE OF IT.

I'M STANDING THERE WONDERING WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD POSSIBLY DO A NUMBER LIKE THIS ON DOC... THEN REALIZED IT PROBABLY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS WORLD.
I JUST HOPED I WOULDN'T STUMBLE ACROSS HIS BODY IN THE RUBBLE.
177
I DIDN'T.
GOT THE NEXT BEST THING, THOUGH.
AND I THOUGHT HE WAS SPOOKY IN PERSON.
WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE, BOY?
CRIPES!
DON'T DO THAT!
177
AS YOU CAN SEE, NEITHER I NOR MY ABODE IS IN ANY CONDITION TO RECEIVE VISITORS.
I WOULD PREFER YOU DEPART. NOW.
DOC?
...THAT IS YOU, RIGHT?...
...WHAT WENT DOWN HERE? YOU'RE NOT, UM, DEAD OR ANYTHING...
...ARE YOU?
I MEAN, DON'T TAKE THIS WRONG, BUT YOU DO KINDA LOOK LIKE A GHOST. IF I CAN DO ANYTHING--
YOU SIMPLY BEHOLD MY ASTRAL FORM. MORE THAN THAT IS... OF NO CONCERN TO YOU.
IF YOU HAVE BUSINESS HERE, STATE IT. OTHERWISE...
...LEAVE ME.
WELL, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I CAME LOOKING FOR SOME HELP. BUT YOU'VE GOT PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN, SO--
GO ON.

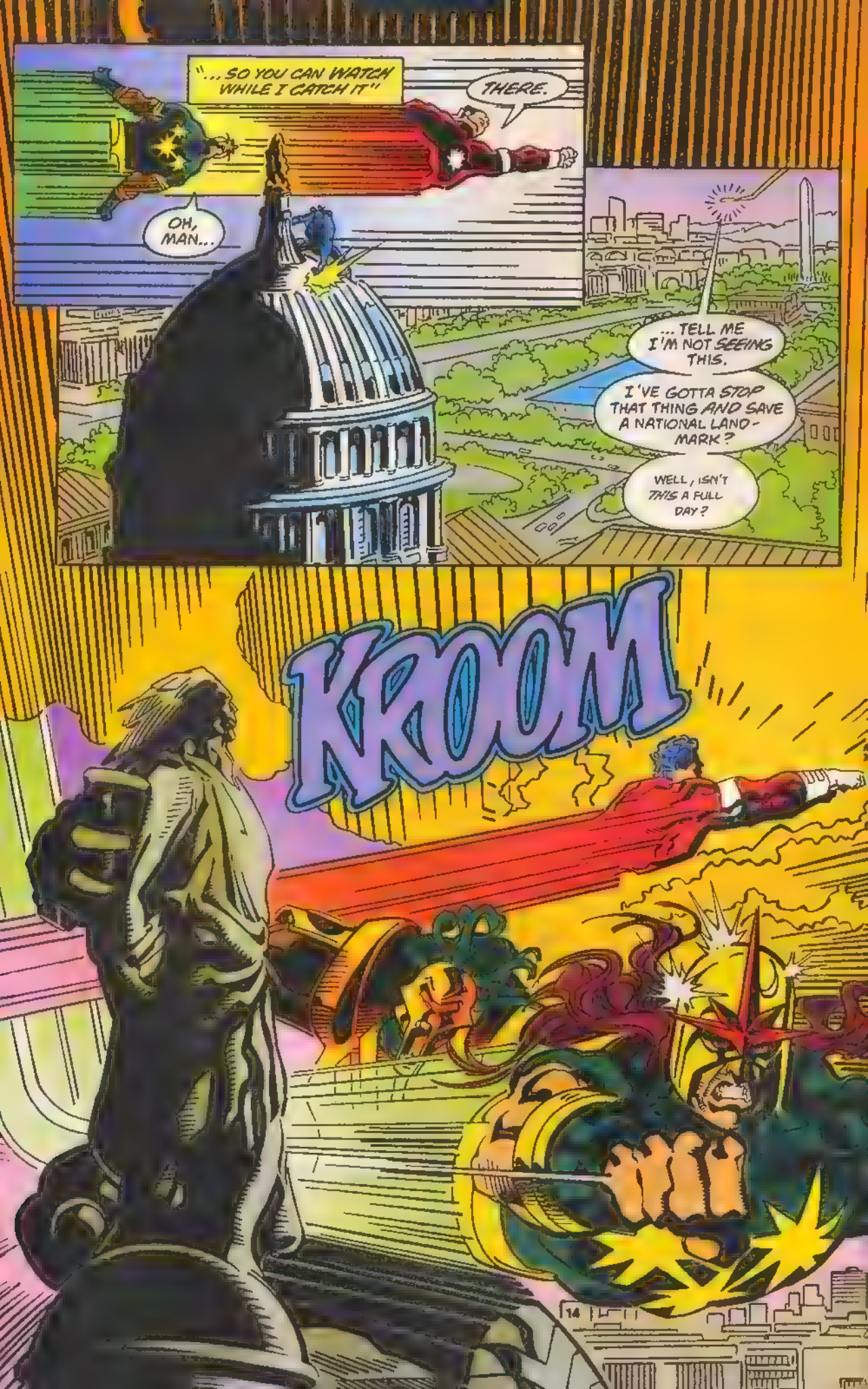
"... QUANTUM BANDS? FUNNY CAPE? YEAH, HIM.
"HIS GIRLFRIEND, KAYLA, HAS THIS THING CALLED THE STARBRAND, WHICH IS...WELL, I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT IT IS, BUT IT'S POWERFUL.
ALL RIGHT... THOUGH FRANKLY THIS IS JUST SOMETHING I HAPPENED INTO. THIS IS ABOUT AS MUCH AS I KNOW.
I'D GUESS YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH QUASAR..
"SO OF COURSE I COME CHARGING TO HER RESCUE...
"...WHICH DIDN'T WORK OUT REAL WELL. THEY GRABBED KAYLA AND GOT AWAY.
"SO QUASAR ROUNDED UP SOME HEROES AND WENT OFF AFTER THEM. I'M PRETTY MUCH HOLDING THE FORT.
"ONLY THING IS, THE STARBLASTERS LEFT BEHIND A LITTLE PRESENT, PROBABLY HOPING TO SLOW DOWN QUASAR. NOW I'VE GOT TO DEAL WITH IT."

"ANYWAY, QUASAR SPOTS SOME DISTURBANCE ON THE MOON AND HEADS OFF TO CHECK IT OUT.
"TRAGEDY AVERTED WITH A LITTLE HELP...
"BUT COME TO FIND OUT THE WHOLE THING WAS JUST A DISTRACTION TO SEPARATE QUASAR FROM KAYLA.
"THESE SPACE GOONS CALLED THE STARBLASTERS WERE LOOKING TO GET THEIR HANDS ON KAYLA AND THE STARBRAND.
THE REST OF THE WARRIORS AREN'T AROUND...
...AND THIS THING THE STAR-BLASTERS LEFT IS CAUSING SOME SERIOUS DESTRUC-TION...
...AND... WELL...
...I CAN'T CATCH IT. IT'S TOO FAST.
I SEE.
VERY WELL, THEN. CONTINUE TO TRACK THIS... PRESENT... AS BEST YOU CAN. WHEN I'M ABLE...

"...I'LL SEND YOU HELP."
OKAY, I GO AFTER THE THING AGAIN. BUT I WASN'T ANY BETTER OFF THAN I WAS BEFORE. IT WAS RIPPING UP THE LANDSCAPE AND I COULDN'T GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO LAY A HAND ON IT.
THEN I GET PASSED LIKE A DOOSE DART ON THE AUTOBAHN.
NICE TO BE WRONG ONCE IN A WHILE...
NORTHSTAR?
HNN?
UNNK?

GEEZ!
MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS, "NOW WHAT? I'VE GOT TWO OF THE THINGS TO DEAL WITH?"
...EXCEPT WHEN IT HURTS.
SMAKK

YOU'RE IT? YOU'RE MY HELP?
MERCI FOR YOUR GRATITUDE. DO YOU INSULT EVERYONE WHO COMES TO YOUR AID, OR JUST CANADIAN MUTANTS?
WELL... NO, IT'S JUST... I WAS EXPECTING, YOU KNOW...
...SOMEONE.
OH, FINE. HOW TYPICALLY AMERICAN.
BECAUSE I DIDN'T COME SWINGING IN ON A WEB OR RIDING A FLAMING MOTORCYCLE I MUST BE FAIRLY USELESS. IS THAT IT?
SELF-IMPORTANT FOOL. HAD YOU NOT INTERRUPTED ME, I'D HAVE THE ROBOT TAKEN APART ALREADY.
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT--
SHUT UP WILL YOU?
YOU GONNA HELP ME OR NOT?
WELL... I'M HERE ALREADY, AREN'T I?
I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT AS WELL FOLLOW ME WHILE I RUN OUR QUARRY TO GROUND.
I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF SPEED. WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO, RIDE ME PIGGYBACK?
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
I DO HAVE "THAT KIND OF SPEED." SIMPLY STAY IN MY SLIPSTREAM AND YOU'LL BE DRAWN ALONG BEHIND ME...

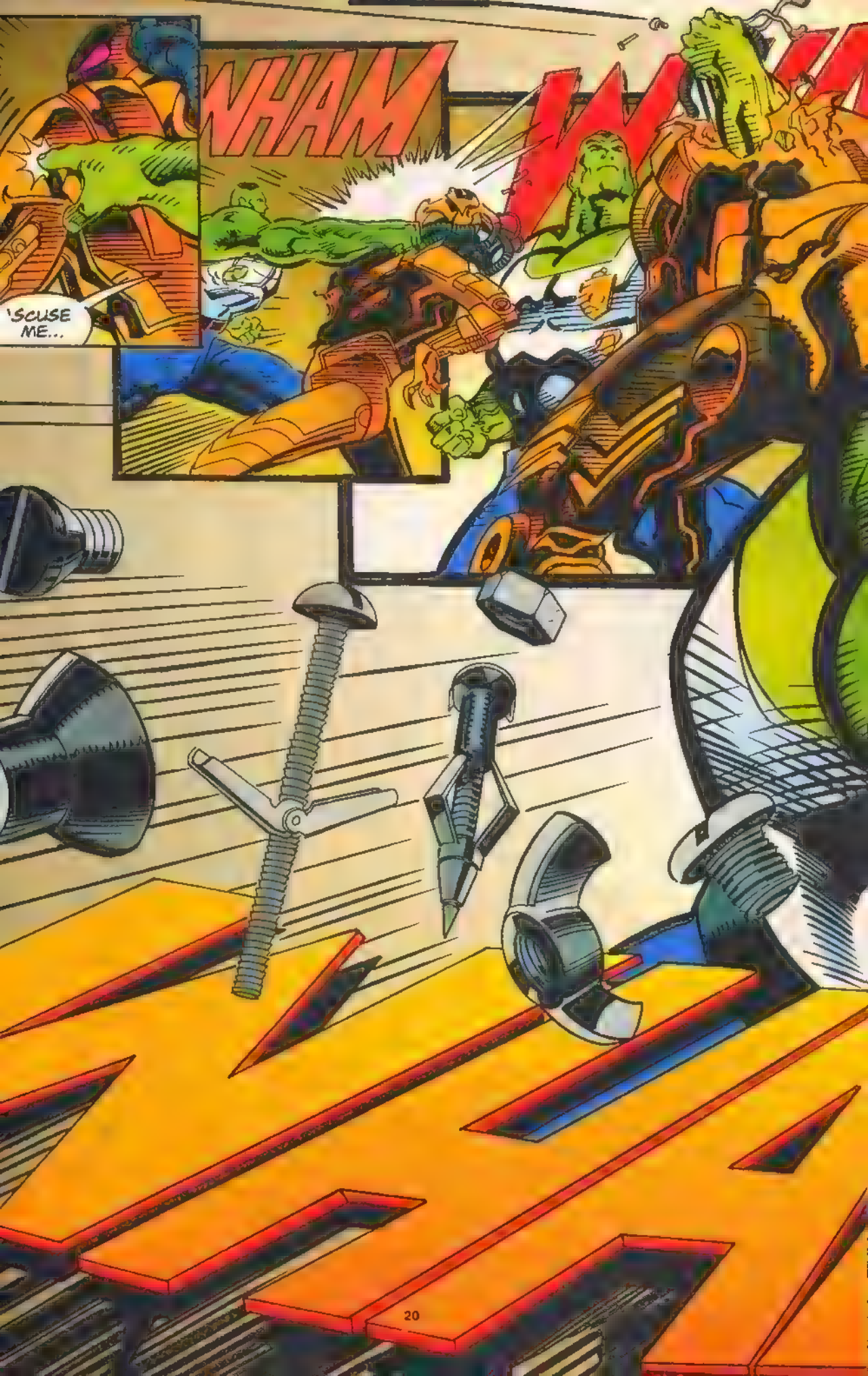

"... SO YOU CAN WATCH WHILE I CATCH IT"
THERE.
OH, MAN...
... TELL ME I'M NOT SEEING THIS.
I'VE GOTTA STOP THAT THING AND SAVE A NATIONAL LANDMARK?
WELL, ISN'T THIS A FULL DAY?
KROOM

ONE ROBOT— ALIEN TECHNOLOGY AND ALL THAT-- BUT STILL, ONE ROBOT.
IT REALLY SOUNDED GOOD ON PAPER.
SPAK
NO BIG DEAL FOR A GUY WITH A XANDAR CORPS SUIT AND A LARGE EGO, RIGHT?
SO DID THE METS LAST YEAR.
KA-RACK
OF COURSE, IT'S NOT LIKE NORTHSTAR WAS SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE EITHER.
NOPE.
NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL.
AWOOM

LEAST HE'S INDEBTED TO ME NOW. MAYBE I CAN TALK HIM OUT OF A COUPLE OF HOCKEY TICKETS OR SOMETHING.
OWING HIS LIFE TO ME DIDN'T IMPROVE NORTHSTAR'S ATTITUDE, THOUGH.
JERK.
PERHAPS YOU'LL SURPRISE ME WITH A PLAN OF ACTION THAT ACTUALLY PROVES USEFUL?
SURE.
HOW'S THIS GRAB YOU--NEXT TIME I LET YOU GET SQUASHED WHILE I MAKE A TACTICAL RETREAT.
EITHER THAT OR WE JUST KEEP HAMMERING IT.
OH, SIMPLY BRILLIANT.
I DENTED IT!
I THINK.
MAYBE.

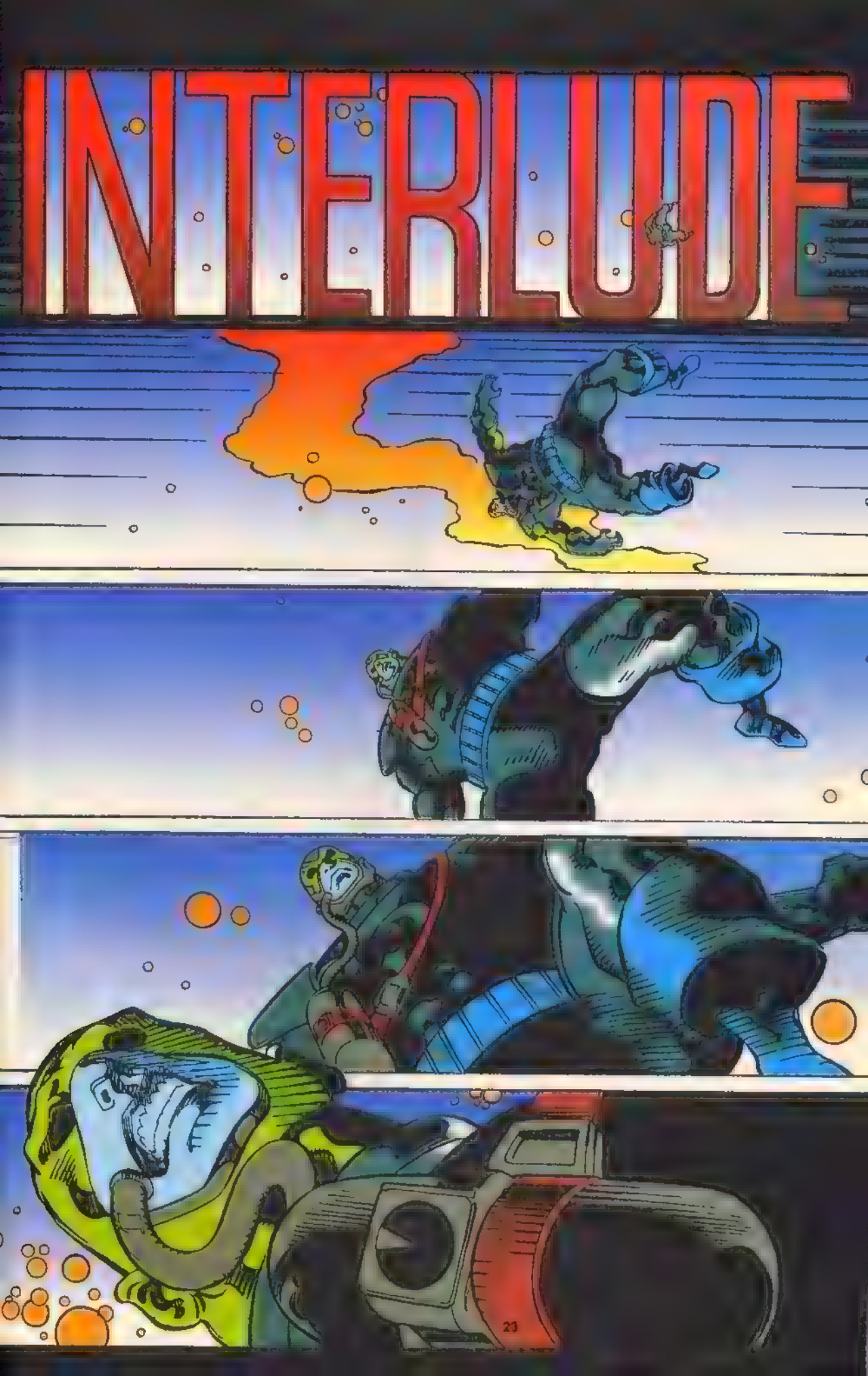
KROOM
UMMPH!
YAAGH!
SLAAP
THIS ISN'T WORKING. NOT EVEN A LITTLE.
WHATEVER THAT THING'S MADE OF, WE DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO TACKLE IT.
OUI. I'D NOTICED.
UM... WERE YOU EXPECTING ANY CREEPY MIST ABOUT NOW?
NON...

SOMEBODY CALL FOR A DOCTOR? OR MAYBE TWO OF THEM?
THE HULK!
IT'S BRUCE.
ON SECOND THOUGHT, THAT'S DOCTOR BANNER TO YOU TWO. AS IN, "DOCTOR BANNER, WHO HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO TODAY."
BUT DON'T LET IT WORRY YOU. DO I LOOK LIKE A GUY WHO HOLDS A GRUDGE?
SO...
...WHERE'S IT AT?
STAY PUT.


WHAM
'SCUSE ME...

...THAT WAS TOUGH, WASN'T IT?
STEVE GONE ALREADY?
YOU MEAN DOCTOR STRANGE? EVAPORATED IS ACTUALLY A BETTER DESCRIPTION.
GREAT.
NOW I GOTTA WALK HOME BESIDES.
WE COULD... UH...
...CARRY YOU.
MR. SPOCK AND A GUY WITH A BUCKET ON HIS HEAD?
YEAH.
RIGHT.
YOU SEE? IT'S LIKE I SAID...
...YOU WANT TO THINK THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON.
AND SOME THINGS --LIKE SEVEN-FOOT GREEN GUYS HAVING SURLY DISPOSITIONS AND BEING PARTICULARLY USEFUL IN A FIGHT--
--YOU STILL CAN.
END.

INTERLUDE



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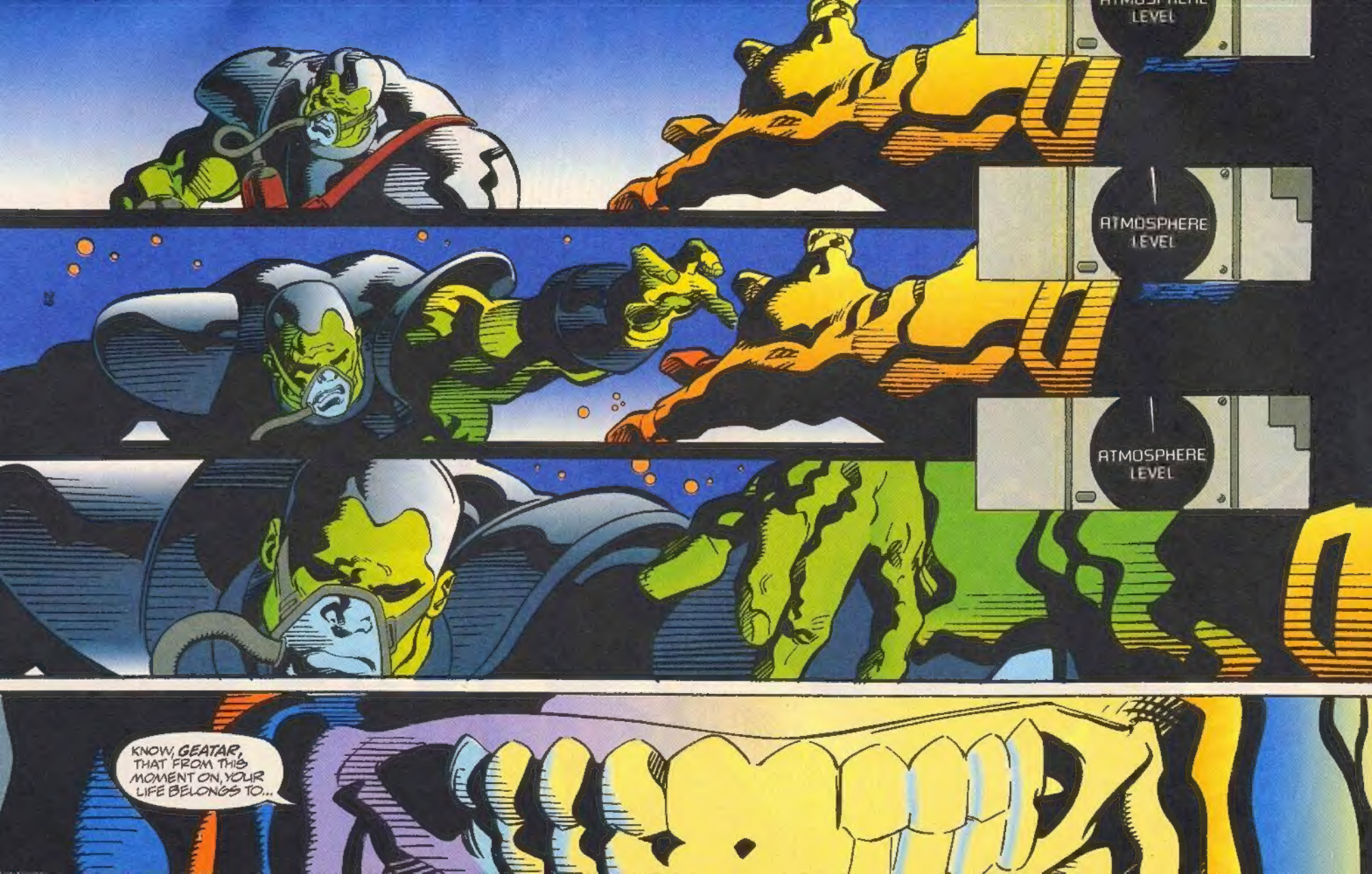
ATMOSPHERE LEVEL


ATMOSPHERE LEVEL
ATMOSPHERE LEVEL
ATMOSPHERE LEVEL
KNOW, GEATAR, THAT FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOUR LIFE BELONGS TO...

...THANOS OF TITAN!
NEXT:
THANOS'S SECRET DEFENDERS

c/o Marvel Comics
387 Park Avenue South
New York, N.Y., 10016

Lines

Mike Rockwitz: Editor **Joe Andreani: Assistant Editor**

ATTENTION CORRESPONDENTS: ALL LETTERS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION MUST INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS THOUGH WE WILL WITHHOLD THAT INFO BY REQUEST!

FROM THE MIKE:
1994, the year of the *Hartford Whalers* and the *New York Jets*, is almost upon us. 1994 also marks the year when my books are really going to be buzzing. THE SECRET DEFENDERS are going to be coming from all ends of the Earth to battle unbelievable menaces. THE MIGHTY THOR is going to be sane, but he'll be burying a comrade. NAMOR and THE FANTASTIC FOUR are going to be getting real busy with one another. CAPTAIN AMERICA is really going to see if he has a "Fighting Chance" against the latest threat on his life. See you in thirty!

Dear Mr. Rockwitz,

Four vociferous words in response to the ninth issue of SECRET DEFENDERS: Much! Much! Much Better! I regret to say, despite my long-time fascination with Doctor Strange and all things mystical, I was very close to dropping the book and trying one of the Midnight Sons titles for my magic fix.

Although I prefer more experimental forms, I have no problems with Andre Coates's artwork. He's done very well capturing the essence of each hero. I especially liked his Spider-Woman. The simple and contrived plotting and writing has been my main concern. Roy Thomas can be a very good writer (I recommend the Spider-Man/Doctor Strange team-up "The Way to Dusty Death" to anyone), but it just seems to me that he has been putting SECRET DEFENDERS last on his list of numerous projects. Issue #9 was your last chance, and I'm happy to say that you've won me back. This issue has the kind of mature use of characters that long-time Marvel fans expect and deserve.

Tom Grindberg's characters are powerful; his Doctor Strange is dark and brooding just like he should be, and his depiction of the book-cluttered Sanctum Sanctorum is right on the mark. This is exactly the kind of artist this series needs, one who can fill up a splash page with a battle or an extra-dimensional portal.

I can't believe the difference Ron Marz has made to the book in only one issue. The story now seems to be happening within the continuous Marvel Universe. Previous relationships between characters are taken into account, and that is very important to scholars of the Marvel Universe out there. Ron Marz is an excellent scripter. I love the scene in which the reader is returned to the battle and War Machine and Thunderstrike are in the middle of discussing being compared to Iron Man and Thor. Also, established villains seem to work better in these early stages of the book.

Keep the editorial leadership and quality coming. I am very happy with the decisions you have made to change the book.

Roderick Castle
15 Abbottsfield Place
Buffalo, NY 14213

Well, Roderick, if you're happy, I'm happy! Glad to hear you're as excited by Ron and Tom's arrival on this title as I am.

Dear Mike,

I've just recently renewed my interest in comics, as I read them when I was a kid. Now though, with the help of my husband (who also collects), I've learned the values behind collecting, whether just for the fun of it or the monetary value.

I just want to let you know that SECRET DEFENDERS is definitely in my collection! I have also taken interest in collecting the original DEFENDERS. I hope to locate the back issues at my favorite shop. I am a fan of teams, and one of my childhood faves was THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

The artwork is awesome and psyches me up to bust out my drawing supplies and create, create, create!

Thanks for being so instrumental to my renewed interest!! Keep up the great work.

Deborah L. Von Cannon
7236-150th St. SW, Apt. 50
Tacoma, WA 98439

Welcome back to the world of comics, Deborah. I'm happy that you've made SECRET DEFENDERS part of your new collection. And since you mentioned the F.F., you might be interested to know that I also edit FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED, featuring team action as you like it! Be sure to check it out!

Dear Mike,

When I first saw an advertisement for THE SECRET DEFENDERS, I was elated. I thought the idea of having a new group of teammates assembled for each new storyline was wonderful. I personally love to see my favorite heroes in titles outside their own. I also thought a series like this would be a good way to get to know and understand characters I was not so familiar with, or did not know at all. I thought the title had great potential, and I still believe that, but (here it comes) you have some definite problems.

First of all, there's a big misunderstanding as to why Doctor Strange chooses certain heroes. In the Xandu storyline, though, you did much better. It was obvious that Doc chose Spider-Man and Scarlet Witch because they had experience in confronting Xandu.

Secondly, it seems to me that the plots need to be worked on. It's not that I don't understand them, it's just that they seem weird and boring at the same time -- not a good combination. Again, the Xandu storyline was much better than the previous two, but still not up to my expectations.

Another problem I have is the villains. I mean, they're so cheesy. It doesn't matter how powerful you make these villains; if they're cheesy, they're cheesy.

On the bright side, your penciler, Andre Coates, is good. But now you announce that you're replacing Coates with Tom Grindberg! I mean, come on! You're losing your greatest strength by replacing Coates!

Joshua Scovil
567 West A Street
Creswell, OR 97426

Sorry to hear you're less than thrilled with the arrival of Tom Grindberg to these pages, Joshua. Andre did a fine job, and his presence is missed. All I ask is that you give Tom some time; I'm sure his work will grow on you. And I hope the writing of Ron Marz is more to your liking.

Dear Defenders,

After collecting comics for over twenty years, I am writing to a letters page for the very first time to offer my congratulations on a great comic book. MARVEL TEAM-UP was one of my favorite Marvel titles ever, and I was sorry to see it go. Now you have brought the concept back and made it even better. The idea of "mini-teams" really allows you to mix and match a very diverse group of heroes!

Scott V. Kolakowski
328 Thomas Drive #4
Laurel, MD 20707

Hey, Scott, what took you so long to write? Thanks for the encouraging words, and keep reading!

NEXT ISSUE: THANOS! GEATAR! TITANIUM MAN! NITRO! RHINO! THE SUPER SKRULL! You simply can't pass this one up!